

Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat Augmentations

Background: Augmentation to bolster struggling herds is an effective management tool that requires Commission approval to capture animals at one site and move them to another. Any final Commission endorsement for such actions would come after formal public comment. FWP is proposing two augmentations: one for mountain goats and one for bighorn sheep. The proposed augmentations are:

1. Mountain goat – Move 20 animals to Cube Iron Mountain north of Thompson Falls sometime during the winters of 2017-18 to 2019-20. This herd is currently about 20-30 animals and the target population is 75-100. The area has been closed to hunting since 1978, and recruitment has been low most likely because of natural mortality and mountain lion predation. Augmentation should boost recruitment to the point of population viability. Donor animals would most likely come from the Crazy Mountains.
2. Bighorn sheep – Move 40 animals, mostly ewes with some young rams, to the HD 122 St. Regis cutoff herd sometime during the winters of 2017-18 to 2019-20. This herd has recently declined from 100-130 to 20-25. Cause is unknown, but disease is highly suspected. 25-30% of the remaining sheep have been tested and no Movi found. Donor herds would likely be the Middle Missouri Breaks (HD 622) and/or Petty Creek (HD 203). This action is consistent with the Montana Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy.

All animals captured for augmentation would be given the standard battery of health and disease tests. Further information is found in the Commission packet.